



OPENING TIMES



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6,700 CIRCULATED EVERY MONTH

FREE

FESTIVAL FROLICS

Despite competing with the Bank Holiday, World Cup football and gloriously sunny weather, the organisers of Stockport's 16th Beer & Cider Festival are celebrating a comfortably successful event.

Record breaking Thursday and Friday night sessions made up for smaller than expected crowds on Friday and Saturday lunchtimes with the end result that the numbers attending fell just 37 short of the predicted 4000 crowd.

Not only that, but careful husbandry of the beer and cider stocks meant that even when the Festival shut at 11pm on Saturday night there were still more than 20 beers and over a dozen ciders and perries to choose from.

Festival organiser Jim Flynn was particularly pleased with this. "I was disappointed that the beer ran out early last year although there was nothing we could about it at the time. This time we had plenty of stocks to last and I hope to see a bumper crowd on Saturday night next year." Jim also took the opportunity to thank not only the numerous festival sponsors, including the Stockport Express, licensee Steve Brannan of Ye Olde Vic, but also the many CAMRA members who gave up their time to help staff the event. "With over 120 volunteer staff we were able to make sure the festival was both well-run and policed. I was particularly proud of the fact that even at the busiest sessions no-one had to wait very long to be served."

Customer feedback was also very positive, with a particular number of compliments about the quality of the beers on sale.

Beer, Cider & Perry of the Festival

It is now traditional for the festival's customers and staff to vote for their favourite beers, ciders and perries. It is equally traditional for the votes to be very close and this year was no exception.

On the beer front, third place was shared between Simmer Dim from Valhalla Brewery in the Shetlands and Old Freddy Walker, a powerful old ale from Moor Brewery in Somerset. Second place went to Alba, an unusual strong ale from Heather Ales of Strathaven, near Glasgow. The winner, though, was the magnificent White Amarillo from the Durham Brewery, a crisp, hoppy beer in the classic Durham style. With cider and perry, there were a number of highly commended entries including Minchew Blakeney Red, the French Bermond Cider from Normandy, Barker's Perry, Hecks Bramley with Honey and Ralph's Dry Cider.

The winning cider, though, was a long-time festival favourite, Yarlington Mill, made by Dennis Gwatkin of Abbeydore in Herefordshire. The winning perry has also picked up awards before but this was the first award at Stockport. This went to Hendre Huffcap made by Hecks of Street, Somerset. Congratulations to all concerned.



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GBBF 2002

This year's Great British Beer Festival takes place from 6th-10th August at London Olympia. This annual celebration of Britain's best beers is not to be missed with its great pub atmosphere, huge selection of beer styles as well as live music on each day. This year sees a wide variety of musicians including Humphrey Lyttleton, Paul Jones and Dave Kelly from the Blues Band as well as brass bands and string quartets, so there really should be music to suit all tastes. Pub quizzes, tombolas, pub games, wandering entertainers and auctions also provide entertainment throughout the festival. As well as a huge selection of ales, there is also cider, perry and some of the finest beers from around the world including real lagers. The choice can be overwhelming with over seven hundred different beverages on sale but fortunately we provide tasting notes for many of the beers to help you make your selection and our knowledgeable bar staff are also able to provide guidance. There is a fantastic selection of food available at all times to help soak up the alcohol. If you wish to bring children there is a Family Room for under 18s with entertainers and games, however supervision must be provided by a family member.

Win a FREE trip to the home of Czech beer

Budvar, the Czech brewer of the celebrated Budweiser Budvar beer, is donating a unique prize which you only can win if you become a CAMRA member at the Great British Beer Festival. Join CAMRA for just £16 and win a free trip to the Budvar brewery in the Czech Republic. All new members will be entered into the prize draw at the end of the festival and one lucky winner and their guest will be taken to Prague and the Budvar brewery for a long weekend on an all expenses-paid trip which will include a night in Prague and a tour of the Budvar brewery. If you've thought about joining CAMRA before, now is the time to do it and have the chance to win this unforgettable prize! Don't miss the Great British Beer Festival this year, it has everything you could want for an enjoyable day out and is open late on the 7th, 8th and 9th August. You can find out more including all the opening times by checking out our website, www.gbbf.org.uk, or phoning our information line on 0900 525 2525 (calls charged at 60p per minute). You can even book your ticket in advance by telephoning 0870 739 7500.

IN JUNE'S OPENING TIMES

Editors View	2	Stockie on the Oche	11
Pub of the Month	3	Train to Paradise	13
Le Trappiste	4	Camra Calling	14
Cider Judging	5	5 Years Ago	15
Brewery News	6	Curmudgeon	15
Hours News	7	High Peak Events	16
Stagger	8	At the Globe	17
Mild Challenge	9	Looking Back	18
Letters	9	Stateside Drinking ...	18
Manchester Matters	10	Pub News	19


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IN THE EDITOR'S VIEW..

It's BRICKBATS and BOUQUETS this month. First, many thanks to all those who made this year's Stockport Beer & Cider Festival such a success. Due to the unusual circumstances this year, running it on an extended Bank Holiday weekend and against the background of the World Cup, it was always going to be difficult to predict how the festival would fare.

However you, our customers, did us proud with two record evening sessions on Thursday and Friday. Many thanks to all of you, we couldn't do it without you. See you next year!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Let's be clear, we are 100% behind Manchester hosting the Commonwealth Games. The city will be on the international stage and will be able to showcase everything it has to offer to the thousands of foreign visitors and journalists who will be descending on us.

Well, almost everything. Amongst other things, Manchester is one of the country's great brewing centres. Yes, indeed. It might not be able to match the huge volume of beer that comes out of Burton but it does have the biggest concentration of family brewers anywhere in the UK. Hydes, Holts, Lees and Robinson's keep alive a tradition that has all but vanished in many parts of the country. Take in the north west as a whole and you can double that number. These old brewers are also complemented by a huge number of new micro brewers, ranging from small pub-based operators to substantial enterprises like Phoenix.

Yet not one of these companies can legally associate itself directly with the Games. What could have been a county-wide celebration of the Games in the region's pubs (another of our great assets), enthusing locals and entertaining visitors alike, has been passed up. Instead the lacklustre Boddingtons Commonwealth Ale is being made available in just 200 outlets in the north west. Boddington's of course is owned by Interbrew, based in that well-known Manchester district of Leuven (that's in Belgium, by the way). Whilst accepting the need for sponsorship to enable the Games to make money, it beggars belief that a deal has been struck in terms which, for our local brewers at any rate, make a mockery of what is one of the Games' great strengths - their inclusiveness.

John Clarke

Hands up all those of you who were able to take advantage of Chancellor Gordon Brown's generous duty cut on the price of a pint of micro-brewery brewed beer for Her Majesty's Jubilee Weekend. Er...I'm sorry, can't see any raised hands...., come on, SOMEBODY, surely... ..well in fact no. Although I, like you, am sure that the duty cut will happen, it certainly did not happen in May, nor will it in June, July, maybe. And what benefit will you get? Well probably very little. Leaving aside the fact that 83% of beer consumed in pubs is factory produced (and not eligible) and that 11% of the rest is brewed by the Regionals (Robbies, Hydes, Lees, Holts and their ilk) - and not, (sadly) therefore, eligible; the remaining 6% of micro-brewery (eligible) beer, most of which is drunk by the sort of discerning consumer who reads OT, is largely drunk in pubs owned by companies who are pocketing the entire price cut. Hopefully, it WILL be good for the micros, who can now compete on price with the chemical factories (eg John Smiths) for the pubco business, but the amount of saving you and I will see? Basically - nada!

P.B. Hutchings

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Fight for Consumer Choice in Pubs - Join CAMRA now - see page 19!

PUB OF THE MONTH JUNE 2002

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
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3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
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The Stockport & South Manchester CAMRA Pub of the Month for June is the Grapes on Castle Street, Edgeley. In these days when pubs are being themed, branded or otherwise made over, it is the plain, simple community local which increasingly remains the backbone of cask ale and the traditional pub spirit.

In many ways the Grapes sums this up to a tee. A straightforward two-roomer, knocked about a bit perhaps thirty years ago and apart from a lick of paint now and again, largely untouched since, the Grapes succeeds when many industry 'experts' will tell you that it should have no future.

There's no food, no children's play area, not even a beer garden. The cask beer range is just mild and bitter, albeit Robinson's Hatters and Best always served in top condition. So what's the secret of the Grapes' success?

Community spirit is the answer. While the night-time visitor might find the pub quiet, at lunchtime and in the afternoons and right through to early evening the Grapes attracts a loyal, lively crowd of regulars who appreciate the simple and continuing qualities that this pub has. Great beer and efficient, welcoming staff are part of the equation but most of all it's down to the names over the door. Last month Dave and Sandra George celebrated 25 years at the helm of the Grapes and it's down to them that the pub has remained its plain, solid, welcoming self while so much of the nearby pub scene has changed, often for the worse.

Continuity like this is well worth celebrating - join us when we present this well deserved award on Thursday 27 June, from 8.00pm. **J.C.**

The Grapes is at the Stockport end of Castle Street. Numerous buses including 313, 28, 11, 309, 310, 369 and 371 will drop you nearby.

The local branch of CAMRA decide on a Pub of the Month by a democratic vote at the monthly branch meeting.

OPENING TIMES SPECIFICATIONS

Column Widths, single 84mm, double 172mm. Image height 26cm. NB Advertisers who supply camera ready artwork designed for another publication that cannot be resized to our standard sizes will be charged the equivalent column/centimetre rate plus a surcharge of at least 30%. Adverts that require unusually large amounts of design work will have the extra work carried out by a studio at full commercial rate.

CAMRA PRESENTATIONS

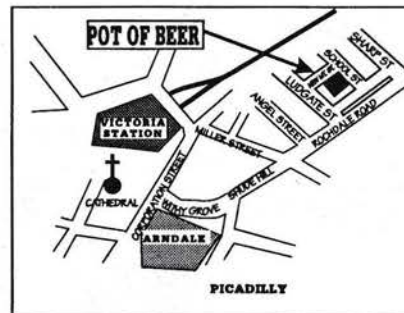
Stockport & South Manchester Branch of CAMRA (The Campaign for Real Ale)'s last two Pub of the Month awards were presented to Vinnie Burke and Irene McEwen (right) of the Royal Mortar on Hillgate in May, and to Jayne and Bryan Hall of the Ash, Manchester Road, Heaton Norris (below, with Stockport Beer & Cider Festival Organiser & local CAMRA stalwart Jim Flynn - on the left of the photo), both great evenings in two good local pubs. CAMRA locally campaigns vigorously to support all that is best in the licensed trade, and these presentation nights allow for a good time to be had by members, and the pubs' regular customers.



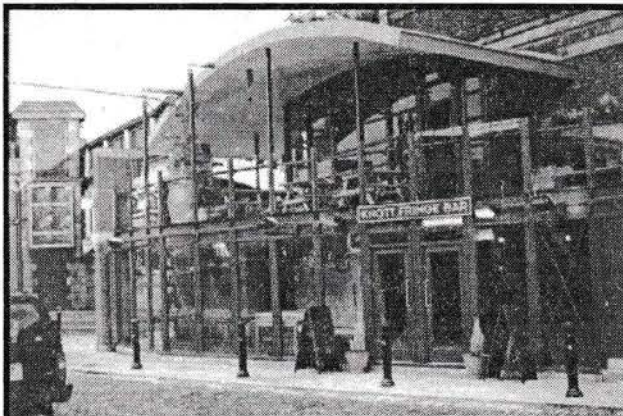
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A BELGIAN EXPERIENCE

Relaxing in Le Trappiste with a glass of De Koninck, Antwerp's finest ale and served in its distinctive glass, watching the bustling crowds outside, soothed by the jazz wafting in the background within, you begin to envy the Belgians and their stylish bar culture. The efficient staff, moving from table to table, taking an order for a speciality beer here (a Trappist ale perhaps, or possibly a lambic fruit beer), and an order for food there, from the traditional Croque Monsieur to an a-la-carte special, only serves to reinforce this impression. Le Trappiste, though, is a Belgian bar with a difference, not least due to the fact that it's on Greenwood Street in Altrincham.

Yes, really. Le Trappiste opened its doors on 17 May and is very much the brainchild of Wayne Reece, who has already made an impression on the town's drinking scene with his stewardship of the Old Market Tavern, which he continues to run.

In fact Wayne had previously considered converting a former bar in the Market Tavern's cellar into a Belgian-style operation but instead decided to go for a completely separate venue. He'd had an interest in the Greenwood Street property for some time and trialled a Belgian night there some 4½ years ago, although only recently did a lease become available on the right terms.

The bar, designed to operate as an authentic Belgian café-bar, operates over three levels, the ground floor supplemented by two mezzanines. Pale lemon walls, exposed brickwork and mellow colours make for a sophisticated yet relaxed atmosphere. The Belgian theme is enhanced by wall mounted references to Tintin and Poirot, old beer adverts and, upstairs, a growing gallery of 'old masters'.

In true Belgian fashion, table service prevails, with no standing permitted apart from a small area near the bar for those waiting a free seat. Another authentic touch is the combined beer and food menu, the latter ranging from traditional snacks like Croque Monsieur (essentially an upmarket ham and cheese toastie) to superbly executed specials (and always including a vegetarian option). Wayne has taken great pains to get the food just right and this now accounts for some 40% of Le Trappiste's sales.



The main emphasis, though, remains the beers. Even though booking is now required on most nights, and particularly at weekends, those wishing to book a table and just have a few drinks are as equally welcome as those wishing to eat.

There are two cask ales, with Taylor's Landlord likely to be a permanent feature, alongside six Belgian beers on draught - La Chouffe, Timmerman's Peche, Liefman's Kriek, De Koninck, Westmalle Dubble and La Trappe Blonde. These are supplemented by a bottled beer list including all the monastery-brewed Trappist beers (with the exception of the very rare Westvleteren), the famously sour and acidic lambic beers from Cantillon and numerous other Belgian specialities, all served in the appropriate glass. In common with the best Belgian bars the beers are presented for the customer to pour personally.

The aim is to expand the range, and for those beers that come with rare or expensive glasses, customers will have to 'pay' a deposit in the form of a shoe, which will be hoist aloft in a lobster pot!

While Le Trappiste is very much Wayne's baby, the day to day operations are in the very able hands of licensee Deirdre Zube, an American who came to the UK when her husband was transferred here by Motorola. Her affable outgoing style and the very efficient staff have made Le Trappiste an almost overnight success, particularly with its target 30-plus age group. This can only increase when the outside street is pedestrianised and the big windows folded back on fine days. Get there soon - but don't forget to book ahead at weekends.

JC.

Le Trappiste is at 40 Greenwood Street, Altrincham. Book on 0780 175 8282. Opening hours are 12-3 and 6-11, Monday, Wednesday, Friday; 12-4 and 6-11 Thursday and Saturday; 12-5 Sunday. Food is available from 12-3 and 7.30-10 every day.



BREATHE IN AND OUT ...AND IT FEELS FLUFFY

Judging CAMRA's champion cider and perry

If you've ever been to Stockport Beer & Cider Festival, you'll know that we really do like our cider. That's why we hosted CAMRA's National Cider and Perry Championship for four years from 1998 to 2001. But we always knew we couldn't hog it forever, and this year it was the turn of the Reading Beer & Cider Festival to take over this important event. Rhys Jones went along to see how it went...

A fine spring day, with warm sunshine and a light cooling breeze - what perfect conditions to enjoy cider in a meadow. Now Reading's never struck me as the most characterful of places, but the King's Meadow is a welcome green space between the station and the river Thames, and it is here that Reading Beer & Cider Festival pitches its tents.

One large marquee houses the beer, cider, and main stage, while there's a smaller tent for "overflow" drinking and to serve as the "quiet room" when bands are playing, and a number of food concessions scattered around outside. The long bar in the big tent is quite a sight - the longest continuous bar in Britain, claim the organisers - and when I arrive, 50th or so in the Saturday opening time queue, the substantial area devoted to cider and perry is already well populated by well-known faces on the cider scene, both sides of the bar.

The programme promises cider and/or perry from 36 different producers, including a massive 16 perries. For the moment, a number are withdrawn from sale to conserve stocks for the final round of judging. Even so, there's more than enough to go at, and I try some perry from the seldom-seen Worcestershire maker Barkers. A very pleasant drop - if this has failed to make the final judging, the judges should have some real treats in store. Soon enough, I'm "volunteered" to join the final judging panel for cider. Six ciders, five people - mainly CAMRA cider activists from hither and yon, including festival organiser Andrew Lord, with technical assistance from industry expert Andrew Lea. The first couple of samples poured found us a quiescent crew - brows furrowed, scores and comments dutifully noted down, but not much interaction. Sample no. 3, though, really got us talking - an elusive but complex aroma led to a fascinating, full-flavoured drink which, despite being the sweetest so far, held a teasing balance that kept on board those of us who prefer our cider dry. Tongues loosened by this splendid stuff (which would prove to be the championship winner), from now on the banter flowed fast and loose. A classic overheard phrase was "breathe in and out and it feels fluffy" (a description of the fault in cider fermentation known as "mouse"), while the cry "Happy Guy Fawkes Night" greeted a disappointingly sulphurous sample.

A little time to reconsider the first-tasted samples, then it was time for final verdicts. Judging forms were handed in, and some quick and efficient secretarial work from the ever-helpful Reading team came up with the all-important results:

CAMRA Champion Perry of Britain 2002

1. Minchew Blakeney Red
2. Hindlip Sweet
3. Hecks Hendre Huffcap

CAMRA Champion Cider of Britain 2002

1. Gwatin Yarlinton Mill
2. Cornish Orchards Medium
3. Burrow Hill Sweet

Released from my duties, having helped to judge the cider finalist I was eager to try the winning perry. Kevin Minchew's products hardly ever disappoint, and this example of Blakeney Red was up to his highest standards. Now it was time to take a broader look at the range, and pretty impressive it was. Fans of Welsh or East Anglian ciders will have been disappointed - I gathered there had been difficulties, as there often are, in assembling the full range desired. But other regions were well-represented, with a particular strength in Cornish ciders, very welcome as they seldom seem to make it east of the Tamar. Three producers were previously unknown to me, of which one - Cornish Orchards - won silver in the cider class, while the splendidly dry Wick Court perry from Gloucestershire, though not amongst the winners, is something I shall certainly look out for in future. The ciders were well presented, the programme notes were useful, and staff helpful and well-informed.

Any criticisms are really little more than nit-picking, but it was a bit of a blunder not to have any ABVs (alcohol content) displayed; and the smartly printed cask cards unfortunately used too large a font size to accommodate the longer producer names, so that Lower Whiddon Farm appeared as "Lower Whiddo" - there's still something to be said for low-tech, hopefully legible handwriting!

Those of us involved in Stockport Festival's cider bar over the years can be proud of our achievement in showing that CAMRA's cider and perry championship could be successfully run at a regional festival. I do envy Reading their spacious outdoor setting, and they made a great job of it. I'm sure the decision to hold the judging at Reading next year can be no more than a formality, and I'd urge all cider and perry fans to get there for a great time. It'll take place over the May Day Bank Holiday weekend, and the final round of judging will be on the Saturday.



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No-Go Games

The Commonwealth Games are arguably the high point of Manchester's history over the past 100 years, putting the city well and truly in the international spotlight. It is ironic then that the region's brewers have been forbidden from joining in the celebrations to mark this momentous occasion.

Many local brewers were planning beers to mark the Games. These plans have now either been scrapped or changed following the intervention of Peter Tomkies, the 'Brand Protection Manager' for Manchester 2002 Ltd, the company charged with delivering the Games on budget.

To meet this budget, use of the name and logo has been sold to a variety of sponsors, and as far as beer goes the purchaser is Interbrew in the guise of Boddingtons at Strangeways. The result? The only commemorative beer is the frankly uninspiring Boddingtons Commonwealth Ale, which resembles little more than a 5% version of the standard brew. It will be available in about 200 outlets - hardly making for a region-wide beery celebration of the Games.

As for the other brewers? To quote Tomkies in a letter he has sent to CAMRA:

"...We must insist that breweries do not undertake any activity or produce any material that creates an association between the ...Commonwealth Games and their company or products"

While making the perfectly valid point that use of any trademark etc owned by the Games should not be used, he then tightens the screw with the words:

"In addition they must ensure that the promotion and marketing of their beers does not create any association with the Commonwealth Games either directly or by implication"

This is all backed up by the implied threat of legal action against any brewer which dares infringe these stringent restrictions. Luckily, some of the region's brewers are effectively getting round this nonsense by coincidentally producing beers that just happen to have non-committal, vaguely sporting, themes. Hence next month you will be able to enjoy Lees Sprinter, Robinson's Stadium Bitter and Holt's Baton Bitter. Don't also overlook the new beer from Boggart Hole Clough Brewery celebrating a local woodland sprite, 'Common Elf'.



Family Favourites



Holt's are on the move, with a £6 million investment earmarked for new pubs, refurbishments, the introduction of hot food to nine outlets and improvements to the Derby Brewery. One pub has already been bought, in New Moston, and a former bank in Bury is being converted into Wyldes, due to open this summer. On the beer front, Baton Bitter and the stronger Baton Gold will be out soon and further special beers are being planned. These include Edward's Amber (in memory of two Edward Holts) and a stronger winter ale, Thunderbolt. Early 2003 may even see a bitter brewed with honey.

Hydes current seasonal is Red Admiral, featuring hops of the same name. It's a pale copper, 4.4%, refreshing bitter. Ideal for the early summer and one of the best craft beers so far. Hydes also surprised everyone by producing a one-off beer to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee. This was Gowd'n Reign, a pale gold, fresh, light beer brewed with three hop varieties. Very drinkable it was too, especially when you consider it had an alcohol content of 6.8 per cent!



Robinson's currently have Young Tom as their seasonal and next month this will be followed up with Stadium Bitter. Also out now is the new Snowdon Bitter brewed for the company's Welsh estate, but also available elsewhere - Opening Times tried it in

Stockport's Swan With Two Necks. A darkish, 4 per cent beer, it slightly resembles a souped-up version of Hatters, but is none the worse for that, being refreshing and easily drinkable. There's no reason why it shouldn't emulate the success of Cumbria Way.

Robinson's are also plunging into the export market. The brewer has won an order to supply beer to 40 Italian bars with 300 firkins (9-gallon casks) of Frederics. This follows an enthusiastic response to the beer earlier this year at the Rimini Trade Fair. Robbies joined forces with five other independent brewers to clinch the contract, which sees each brewer get a two-month slot during the year.

This could be just the tip of the iceberg and if all goes according to plan, there could be an on-going listing of Frederics in over 100 bars and restaurants around Italy next year. Old Tom is also likely to be available there next year after an equally enthusiastic reception at the Rimini event. Marketing Manager Oliver Robinson has been out to Italy to sample the quality of the beer being sold (it's a dirty job but someone has to do it!) and has been very impressed with what he found, with great pains being taken to get both the condition and the temperature of the beer just right.

The United States is also a new export market for Robinson's with a deal recently clinched to ship 3,000 cases of bottled beer into



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YOUNG TOM & SNOWDON ALE

A WARM WELCOME IN A TRADITIONAL PUB

America over the next 12 months. A report in the trade press featured a reception at the UK consulate in New York with representation from several UK brewers. Robinson's seemed to particularly hit the spot with Old Tom but also featured a new bottled beer, Northern Glory.

New Brewery for Salford

Richard Bazen, former brewer at Bridgewater Brewery and latterly Phoenix, has left the latter (on amicable terms let it be said) and is now poised to set up his own brewing operation.

Bazens' Brewery will be based in Salford and as we went to press Richard was examining premises on Muslin Street, which is behind the Crescent pub (handy as an informal brewery tap).

First indications are that this is promising and if all goes to plan, the next step will be to have the 5-barrel plant constructed. Richard already has a friend of a friend who works as a stainless steel fabricator lined up for this. The aim is to have something that very closely resembles the Bridgewater Brewery layout. Casks have also already been ordered.

The aim is to move quickly once the premises have been signed for, so, if all goes to plan the first beers could emerge by the end of July. Beer names are still being worked on but Navigator will be back and Richard is also looking at a 4% blond beer, a 4.5% premium and a 5.5% special bitter. These will be supplemented by seasonal beers as trade develops. Will the wondrous (and award-winning) Delph Porter also make a return? OT is in close contact with Richard so hopefully there will be more news next month.

Apologies to all concerned for the lack of micro-brewery news this month - pressures of time and space prevented us from doing it justice - look for our bumper round-up next time!

MINISTER'S HOURS REFORM PROMISE

Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell has reaffirmed the Government's commitment to licensing reform in England and Wales.

Speaking at the 10th anniversary conference of the Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers, Ms Jowell recognised the contribution of the pub trade to the economy and reassured it that the Government would fulfil its promise to reform licensing laws.

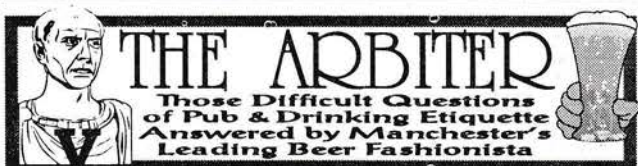
Ms Jowell said: "Pubs are at the heart of our communities. They bring a great deal of enjoyment and social contact to people of all ages. They are also vital for the generation of new employment opportunities that breathe life into communities. Sales of alcohol of around £30 billion each year generate duty and VAT that buys our country's schools, roads, and hospitals and puts policemen on our streets.

"But our licensing laws speak for another decade not our own. I am determined that we deliver on our promises and bring forward our new proposals to modernise our licensing laws as soon as possible." The promised changes to the current licensing regime would see up to 24-hour opening subject to consideration of impact on local residents, a single liquor and public entertainment licence, and the transfer of licensing from magistrates to local authorities.

Ms Jowell said the problems of disorder and disturbance associated with fixed and artificially early closing times would be eliminated.

The proposals would also allow children unlimited access to pubs and bars subject to the licensee's discretion, and Ms Jowell stressed the importance of allowing children to understand and experience alcohol in a controlled way.

"By failing to modernise and by allowing strict Edwardian laws to deny children real access to the world of pubs, we have made a rod for our own backs," she said.



THE ARBITER
Those Difficult Questions
of Pub & Drinking Etiquette
Answered by Manchester's
Leading Beer Fashionista

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7
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The drinks are on us this month as we offer *Opening Times* readers the chance to win a tray of **Hartleys XB** in 500ml bottles. Meanwhile it's congratulations to Mr R Elder of Midlothian who won a copy of *The History of Robinson's Brewery* in our April quiz.



To enter this month's competition, all you have to do is answer the following two questions.

1. What are the two predominant colours of the Hartleys XB pump clip?
2. In which Cumbrian town is Hartleys based?

Send your answers by the end of the month to: Robinson's Competition, BHA, 94 Churchgate, Stockport, Cheshire, SK1 1YJ

Or by fax to 0161 477-0809 or e-mail info@barryhook.com
Normal competition rules apply

STAGGER

with Mark McConachie

Ladybarn, Fallowfield and Rusholme

It was the eve of the Muslim Eid festival weekend so I knew that the latter part of our foray would involve a fair amount of carnival activity and lively crowds. By contrast, our start point was the calmness of Green Street in Ladybarn.

The White Swan is located just off Mauldeth Road in the village's centre; it's a large 1930's Robinson's house (that was originally a Kay's Atlas Brewery house) that has a sizeable beer garden and some interesting external features, like the 'Outdoor Dept.', still visible. Internally much has changed, a tiled corridor takes you to the front two rooms which are reasonably intact; left is a darts room, right a plusher room; the corridor then opens out into the main part of the pub complete with large bar. Toward the rear of the bar is a pool room and a small, separate vault. The sole cask offering on the large bar was Robbies Best which we reckoned was in fair nick.

Off then to Ladybarn Lane and the ex Talbot, now rejoicing in the name Peninsula. Completely restyled internally, it is a far cry from the tired and care-worn pub of old. Rich autumn and berry-fruit hues combine with a melange of furniture styles from bentwood chairs to leather sofas. It is now an L-shaped, fairly open space that seems to work very well. Could this be the new sophisticated face of Ladybarn? Designed to appeal to a young market, there were two surprises in store for us - Wadworth 6X and Black Sheep bitter on handpull! A pleasant surprise came following the ordering of the latter - it was only £1.60 a pint. Now I call that a reasonable price given the surroundings and the expectations of such an establishment. Only the Black Sheep was tried and that was found to be a most reasonable drink. A slap on the back to all concerned for having the guts to try cask ale here, well done.

Over next to the Brewers Arms - the subject of a campaign in these pages against pubs with misleading signage. Here, the sign stated it sold Cask-conditioned ales yet there were none on sale inside. As we had made an appointment beforehand to talk to the licensee about this, we were expected. Good news came out of all this with some cask beer expected on sale in the near future (*and has now arrived in the shape of Tetley Bitter. Well done! - Ed(1)*).

The Derby Arms is just off Ladybarn Lane and over the last few years has been a trusty seller of Holts bitter. Not so tonight though, and apparently for some time too, as the pub is now keg.

Our mid-point meeting place was the Friendship (Hydes) on Wilmslow Road. This is a large, high-set Victorian pile with a beer patio out front to enable drinkers to interact with the fast-paced goings-on in one of the busiest parts of Fallowfield. Inside, the pub was very busy with students, locals and football followers - the three customer types who typify the Friendship. Football plays a large part here, what with large-screen television and an association with Man. City, I believe. Refurbished some years ago, it appears to be wearing well; with a front and side lounge area, and a back vault-cum-darts area surrounding a reverse J-shaped bar.

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SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS



SERVING ROBINSONS ALES

DARTS - TUESDAY NIGHTS - POOL

Three Hydes beers were on sale this evening, the Light got above average marks; the Bitter was average to good, whilst the Jekylls came out only average. The pub usually sells one of the Hydes seasonal ales but there was no sign of it this time.

A veritable bus garage of pubs and bars followed all without a drop of cask ale between them. These include XS, Orange Grove, Revolution, Robinski's (It's a Scream!), Queen of Hearts, Scruffy Murphys and Sofa; apologies to any keg outlet that I may have missed from this list. It had begun to rain and sleet heavily so we dashed across the road and decked on to the first city-bound bus we encountered. A short half-mile ride later we decked-off again at Platt Lane to sample the pub delights of Rusholme.

Hereabouts, Wilmslow Road only offers pubs that are keg, thus we gave Hardy's Well (good looking pinball machine in there, though), the Huntsman, and the Clarence the miss and went straight to the Welcome just off Dickenson Road.

This is a Greenalls house which thrives upon tradition - traditional pub layout, albeit with some slight opening out; traditional beer in the form of handpulled Greenalls, Tetley and Worthington bitters, plus Bass; traditional music in the form of a rootsy-folksy duo (or was it a trio?) strumming-up in back corner; and most of all a traditional clientele - a good cross-section of people covering all age groups. There are three areas to the pub - a vault for cards and TV, a long lounge broken into two parts for relaxed chatting and drinking, and the stand-up bar area festooned with signed monochrome photos of the stars of entertainment who once plied their trade at the nearby Dickenson Road BBC TV studios (now gone). It is great to see this place is still alive and thriving, long may it remain so. The cask beers were on fine form, especially the Bass, whilst the Tetley and Worthy were deemed agreeable.

So, off into the sleety night and across a thronging Wilmslow Road alive with Eid celebrants and the smells of Asian cuisine to the

Albert (Hydes) on Walmer Street. Here, two beers awaited our sampling - Hydes bitter and Jekylls Gold, both were comfortably on above average form. The style of the Albert was described by one of our number as being "still Irish to the heart", and I do not think anyone could disagree with that sentiment; a two-room, no-nonsense boozier that enjoys a trade from folk who shun the garishness and flounce of newer pretenders for the simple pleasures of a friendly back-street local where talk and good company are the order of the day.

On our final leg now and on to Claremont Road to find that the Nelson (ex Lord Lyon) has been done up in fine style but no cask ale - this place used to sell Holts some years ago. Another keg pub, and a very quiet one too, was Whitbread's Sherwood. Turning tail, we enter Victory Street and pass the Gardeners as it too does not sell cask beer, to drop into the Osborne House another Hydes house, this one standing hard by a newly built mosque. Upon entry a lateral bar divides the pub into front and back areas - front vault and snug, some booth-type areas to the side and reasonable-sized lounge facing you. The decor has a comfortable lived-in appearance that immediately settles one in to an easy frame of mind and ready for the Hydes Mild and Bitter that are on offer. The former gained good marks, whilst the latter walked away with the beer of the night title. Well done the Osborne.

All in all a good stagger, with beer quality being generally average to good which beats previous sojourns to these parts. As it turned out the Eid festival had no effect on our crawl, as seemingly, there were far fewer revellers and they were better behaved. This made their night of celebration a far more pleasant experience for all.

Apologies to Dave Preston who should have been credited with the by-line on last month's Bramhall & District Stagger, but by some electronic error appeared to have been penned by our dear own Ed(1). Sorry Dave.

MILD CHALLENGE NEWS



With Mark McConachie, Challenge Co-ordinator.

Well, that's another year's Mild Challenge over with then - and together with a mammoth pub entry of 83, we've had a great response from you, the drinkers.

108 people entered the challenge, of whom a whopping 84 completed the Challenge Extra (for the T-Shirt) and 13 individuals went on to do all 83 pubs to be awarded the special Tankard (I completed my 83 on May 3rd). Well done to you all.

My grateful thanks go out to all 83 participating pubs and their staff for hosting the challenge; to Hydes for sponsoring their pubs; and to Robinson's for hosting the brewery visit prize winners. Special thanks to licensees who went that bit farther - like Peter Wood at the Lowes, Denton who brewed Jet Amber especially for the event; to Steve Brannan at the Olde Vic, Edgeley who persisted with some interesting beers despite low sales; and the guys at the Nelson, Stockport who were so enthusiastic about the whole thing.

For 2003 we plan some changes to make the challenge both more interesting and more fun. Added to the Challenge Extra and Challenge Ultra (all the pubs) we are thinking of adding Challenge Super for doing 36 pubs, say. There will be some new prizes to be had too, so look out for news nearer the event. My advice is to get training now in preparation for next year's event. So get supping some mild!

CONTRIBUTORS TO OPENING TIMES 218:

John Clarke, Paul Hutchings, Chris Walkden, Mark McConachie, Rhys Jones, Phil Levison, John Taylor, Peter Edwardson, Chris Wainwright, Frank Wood, Tom Lord, Tim Jones, John Cresswell, Stewart Revell.

COPY DATE FOR THE JULY 2002 ISSUE OF OPENING TIMES IS JUNE 28

LETTERS OPENING TIMES

From Bob Mason, Gee Cross:

Just a note to say how enjoyable doing the Mild Challenge is - not that I need an excuse to visit the many excellent pubs which we are lucky to have in this area!

I decided to make my Challenge a bit different this year by just having milds from the micros and/or guest milds - no sneaking the odd Robbies just to get a stamp. In fact no Holts, Hydes or Lees either - I drink enough of theirs during the rest of the year! Twelve excellent pubs and many pints of excellent mild - Beartown Ambeardextrous (Navigation), Porters Dark (Railway), Moorhouse Black Cat (Sportsman), Phoenix Monkey Magic (Buffet Bar), Theakstons (Nelson), Ossett Dark Ruby (Olde Vic), Bank Top Dark (Crown), Greene King (Smithfield), Swale (Beer House), Uncut Amber (Marble Arch), Dark Island (Lass O'Gowrie) and Jet Amber (Lowes Arms).

Compliments to all the above on their excellent ale.

From John Hesketh, Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar:

Feedback from your Mild Challenge. This is just to let you know the results of us joining in the Challenge for the first time.

Plenty of customers asked for cards and plenty of 'trail followers' have visited from near and far.

My regulars, who expect a mild to be available at most times, have tried the more rare milds, provoking positive reactions and discussions - surely the real point of the exercise! The following milds have been on offer during the last five weeks:

Hanby - Black Magic Plus (4%), Hart - Aquarius Mild (3.9%) Moorhouses - Black Cat (3.6%), Burton Bridge - XL Mild (4%) Cottage - Mild (4%), Paradise - Marbury Mild (3.8%) Belvoir - Mild (4.2%), Eccleshall - Monkey Magic (3.4%) Buffy's - Mild (4.2%), Fisherrow - Klondyke 60/- (3.5%) Leyden - Picador Mild (3.6%), Phoenix - Mayfly (4.4%) Fisherrow - Stalybridge Dark (4.9%), Leadmill - Marehay (3.8%), Bryson - Midland Mild (3.5%), Beowulf - Cimmerian Mild (3.6%) Rudgate - Ruby Mild (4.4%), Beechams - Mild (4.5%) Wolf - Mild (3.7%)

And they've all been drunk! In fact the current total of different guest beers served during the last five-plus years stands at just over 3,800.



MANCHESTER MATTERS by Cityman

This month, I'm just concentrating on three items of good news – the usual general round-up will return next time. First – there's great news from the **Brewers Arms** (Ladybarn Lane, Fallowfield) where landlady Tracy Maun tells me that cask beer has now been installed. As the pub has been keg-only for some time, they are starting off with Tetley Bitter, one of the better mainstream beers and which should hopefully wean the locals back on to the real thing. I know that Tracy is very much a beer fan and all being well this could be the start of greater things at the Brewers. More power to her elbow, say I.

C&A Back On Top

There's also a double helping of good news from the City Centre. The **Crown & Anchor** on Hilton Street has been a favourite amongst beer drinkers for many years, although in recent times it's been very much living on past glories. As these words were typed there was still a 'To Let' sign on the wall but that should be coming down now as the pub was in fact taken over by new tenants on 13 May. The tenants in question are Gordon McTear and Don Bremner who have the Enterprise Inns pub on a 21-year lease. Both are keen beer fans with a long record in the trade and their stated aim is to restore the pub to its place on the local real ale scene. In this they are being ably assisted by bar manager Roy Griffiths, who has been at the C&A since last October and has some 25-years experience in the trade. The first thing they did on taking over was clean the place up (carpets, seating and kitchen were all steam-cleaned) and redecorate in traditional style. It's certainly fair to say that the pub now looks brighter and more welcoming than it has done for some considerable time. The outside is also due to be re-signed and re-lit in the near future.

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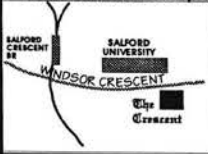
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The beer range is restricted to the Enterprise Inns list but since this features between 60 and 70 cask ales at any one time, this is no great burden. Boddingtons Bitter has been relegated to keg-only status ("its proper place", says Gordon) and plays just a supporting role to four cask beers. These will remain more or less fixed at Taylor's Landlord, Adnams Bitter, Black Sheep Special and Fuller's London Pride. There may be the occasional change (on a recent visit Bateman's XXXB had replaced the Landlord) and they are willing to accept suggestions for possible guest beers.

Apart from the beer, the Crown & Anchor now offers quite a tidy little food operation. The menu runs from cold and hot sandwiches, snacks, light meals to bigger meals from the chargrill and old favourites like Chilli. Vegetarians are catered for and an interesting addition is a selection of small items ranging from Italian meatballs in tomato sauce, a bowl of spiced olives, tiger prawns with garlic butter and hummous – 12 in all which can be ordered singly at £1.75 or three for £4.95. Food is currently available from 12 to 3 (ish) although after the World Cup it will also be sold in the evening.

Another feature is 'laid back Sunday' which sees the pub opening from 11am for breakfasts and brunches (the bar of course doesn't open until midday). There will also be a no-charge cash-back machine available.

It all sounds like a recipe for success, and so far the signs are good with plenty of trade evident on my subsequent visits. Highly recommended.

New Life in the Lass

Another City institution back on the way up is the Lass O'Gowrie on Charles Street. The new manager is Chris Nagy who took over in April. Chris has plenty of experience in the trade both as licensee and also on the brewing side – he used to run the Minerva brew-pub in Hull.

The pub itself is due for a refurbishment in the not-too-distant future but will remain largely unchanged, as will the enterprising guest beers on offer. The major changes, though, are downstairs in the brewery.

The Las O'Gowrie has been brewing since 1983 and as such is one of the longest surviving 'new wave' brewpubs. Unfortunately for most of that time the beers, LOG 35 and LOG 42, haven't been much to write home about, despite selling in large quantities. All that has now changed.

When Chris took over there were clear problems with the brewery and he called on the assistance of Keith Bott from Titanic Brewery who confirmed the presence of a yeast infection. The brewery was therefore closed and completely cleaned out.

Starting with a clean slate, Chris has dropped the names LOG35 and LOG42. In fact LOG35 has gone completely. The new LOG42 is in effect a different beer: full-bodied, but lighter in both colour and body, and with a good bitterness and plenty of hop character. It's a 4.1% beer and is now called Lass Ale. Chris says it was inspired by a beer sold in the pub in 1860. It's very drinkable indeed (as I found to my cost one night) and it is intended to supplement this with further beers.

There may be a second permanent beer in the 5 per cent region but there will certainly be a number of specials and seasonal beers. A formal 'relaunch' is planned for August when Chris hopes to have as many as four house beers available as a mini 'own beer festival'. I asked Chris what the future was for all this, as the pub is owned by Laurel Pub Co. It seems that they are very supportive indeed. The aim is to get the brewery up to capacity and it may even supply other Laurel pubs. The duty cut has helped, too. You won't be seeing the price of the beer come down, but the added financial return it brings has helped secure the brewery's future with the Laurel management.

**HELP HOLD BACK THE NITROKEG TIDE!
JOIN CAMRA (PAGE 19) & DRINK REAL ALE**



**REMEMBER!
IF IN DOUBT -
ASK IF IT'S CASK**

Stockie on The Che

By John Taylor



Well done to Jeff Pearson and his team at the Reddish WMC for they are this season's Stockport Licensed Houses Super League Champions. This is the first time in the 55-year history of this league that Reddish have ever won this prestigious trophy and it will be a very special evening for all their players when the presentation is made on 23 July at their own club.

On the final match of the season, the new Champions travelled to deepest Chorlton and beat a very spirited Club Leisure side 5-2. Vic Clegg (22 & 18) and Jeff Pearson (22 & 29) had given Reddish an early lead, but back came the home side to level things up, through Len Clews with two legs of 23, and Mick Coackley with two legs of 19 darts. When Mick Kilcourse took the first leg of game five for the Manchester side, Reddish must have been fearing the worst, but Pete Day jnr. hit back with legs of 18 & 15, followed by wins for Brad Clegg and Pete Day snr, playing here against his former team.

On the same evening, the Ash Hotel recorded a 6-1 win away at the fourth placed Magnet. The highlight of the evening was a 10-darter for England International Tony O'Shea, which was the best of the season in the league. On the other side of town, last season's champions Royal Mortar were defeating fifth place Bobby Peel 5-2, with Darryl Fitton going out in two legs of 15 darts. So the scene was set for a play-off the following Tuesday between these two old adversaries, to see who would be runner-up.

As you would have expected, the venue was packed and the two teams didn't disappoint anyone in a match that recorded 58 tons or over. The Mortar took the first game through Darryl Fitton (17 & 15); Brian Adshead levelled things up (24 & 17); Lancashire star Kevin Weir (24 & 21) again put the Hillgate side in front. Back came the Ash with Cheshire player Andy Wright (18 & 23) and then Tony O'Shea with two legs of 15, putting the Ash in front for the first time. The match then went all square at 3-3 when mister reliable Tony Daniels won in 16 & 21. The last pairing saw Lancashire player John Hollins for the Mortar take on Ray Matthews, who was still on a high after seeing his football team regain their spot in the Premier Division (for at least one season anyway); this obviously did the trick and he won it for the Ash with nail biting legs of 21 & 22.

Relegation was also decided by way of a play-off. The Royal Oak and the Sidings both lost their last league matches and finished joint bottom. But after the demise of the Moss Rose team, it meant only one team would go down this season. Just a few weeks ago, you could not see any way that the Oak could avoid the drop, but avoid it they did as they beat their Levenshulme opponents 4-3. Veteran Arthur Lilley was their winning hero with legs of 24 & 39, the second leg being about half his age. Well done, Arthur, that new zimmer frame has worked wonders.

The Bobby Peel and the Ash eventually played their team knock-out semi-final, which the Ash won 4-1, with wins for Brian Adshead, Barry Riley, Jack Cuddy and that man Ray Matthews again winning the match with legs of 17 & 21. Steve Minister replied for the Edgeley boys.

That meant another confrontation between the Ash and the Mortar in the final. The Mortar took full revenge over their rivals and for their three previous defeats to them this season, by winning 4-0. The victorious quartet were Darryl Fitton (16 & 15), taking the important scalp of Tony O'Shea, Pete Connolly (24 & 22), John Hollins (24 & 26) and Phil Butler (26 & 24).

The two teams coming up from the Premier Division this season are the Copperfields and Greg Street WMC. So both these venues will have two teams playing in the Super League next season. Do I notice a bit of a power shift in local darts? Keep reading and I will give you all the details as they happen.

PS - Capper is back in town and is looking after the Stockport Arms. I think he is recruiting a decent darts team, which will be a first for him.

Well, it's that time again, see you soon

- John Taylor

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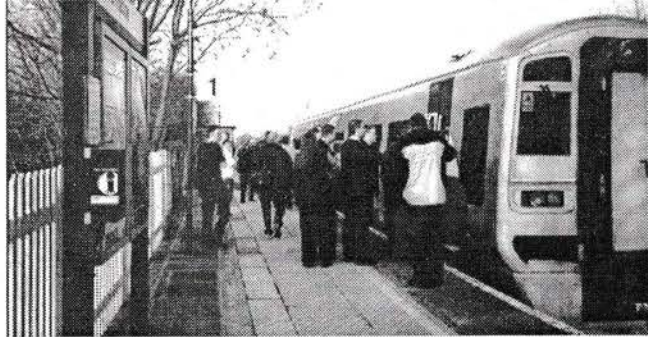
FRIDAY 14 TO SUNDAY 30 JUNE



FAST TRAIN TO PARADISE

The next Paradise Brewery Beer Festival will be held on Friday 5, Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 July. A range of over 40 beers from micro-brewers is promised and this will be complemented by an 'interesting' range at the nearby Bhurtpore Inn. Opening times are 12-11pm Friday and Saturday; 12-7pm Sunday.

For the benefit of those travelling from the Manchester and Stockport area, the redoubtable John Cresswell of the Crewe & Shrewsbury Passenger Association has arranged for the 11.33am Manchester-Cardiff express to stop at Wrenbury (at 12.25pm) on the Friday and Saturday. For the return journey, the Cardiff-Manchester Express will stop at Wrenbury at 5.05pm. Passenger Association



stewards will be available on the station to assist visitors. The Wrenbury Scarecrow Trail will be running at the same time as the beer festival, so visitors will have the added attraction of wandering around the Wrenbury/Aston area looking at the various themed scarecrows in local gardens.

The Bhurtpore Inn will be hosting its annual beer festival the following week. From 9 to 14 July. About 90 beers are expected to feature at this extravaganza. Once again the Passenger Association has arranged for the same trains to stop on the Friday and Saturday. John Cresswell tells us that those intending to visit on the Saturdays should be able to take advantage of a special Wales & Borders Group Save ticket. It's only available on Wales & Borders trains and is for parties of 3 or 4 people. Based on the day return fare, it means that a party of four should be able to get to Wrenbury and back for about £2.50 each. These tickets should be available at Manchester Piccadilly and Stockport stations - in the event of any difficulty, ticket office staff should be advised to contact Wales & Borders customer services!

NEED TO COMPLAIN?

If you experience problems in a pub, please first try to sort it out tactfully with the licensee, but if you need to take it further:-

Local Trading Standards Contacts are:

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Tameside - 0161 342 3477, Derbyshire - 01629 585858
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CAMRA CALLING!

Campaign For Real Ale Branch Diaries
Here are the monthly branch event diaries, starting with Stockport and South Manchester, followed by High Peak and Macclesfield

Diary

JUNE 2002

Thursday 13th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Adswood Hotel, Adswood Lane East, Cale Green, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm.

Friday 21st - Hyde Road Stagger: meet Travelers Call, Hyde Rd 7.30pm; Pineapple, Garratt Way (off Hyde Road) 8.30pm.

Thursday 28th - Pub of the Month presentation to the Grapes, Castle Street, Edgeley. From 8.00pm.

Saturday 6th July - CAMRA Independents Day Treasure Hunt in Manchester City Centre. Starts Beer House, Angel Street 12 noon (doors open 11.30).

Monday 8th - Social: Sir Edwin Chadwick, Stockport Road, Longsight. Starts 9.00pm.

Thursday 11th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Arden Arms, Millgate, Stockport. Starts 8.00pm.

The High Peak & North East Cheshire Branch covers Bredbury, Romiley, Woodley, Marple and all points north. They have advised us of the following events:

Monday 17th - Monthly Branch Meeting: Stalybridge Station Buffet Bar. Starts 8.30pm.

Saturday 22nd - Annual Charity Walk in aid of MIND. 18 miles - 8 pubs - Hayfield to Stalybridge. Starts Royal, Hayfield 10.30am. details from Tom Lord on 0161 427 7099.

Saturday 13th July - Branch Meeting & AGM: Ramseys Bar, Burlington St, Buxton. Starts 2.30pm. All members please attend this important meeting.

JUNE 2002

Apart from Macclesfield & Bollington, the Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch covers a wide area from Wilmslow to Knutsford and down to Congleton. They have notified us of the following events:

Monday 24th - Campaigning Meeting: Boarhound, Brook St, Macclesfield. Starts 8.00pm.

Monday 1st July - Presentation of Pub of the Year Award to the Poachers, Bollington. From 8.00pm.

Wednesday 10th July - Bowls Evening with optional meal: Bulls Head, Moberley. Details from George Symes on 01565-653096



Regional Events

Saturday 6th July - 10th Annual Independents Day Treasure Hunt - starts 12 noon, Marble Arch, Rochdale Road, Manchester. **PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF VENUE**

Wednesday 10th July - Regional Meeting: Crescent, Salford Crescent. Starts 8.0pm - **Guest speakers from three micro-breweries.**

To Do Address Notepad Anniversary CAMRA 93 Planner

14



CAINS

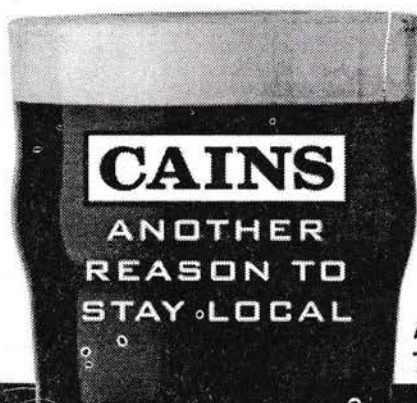
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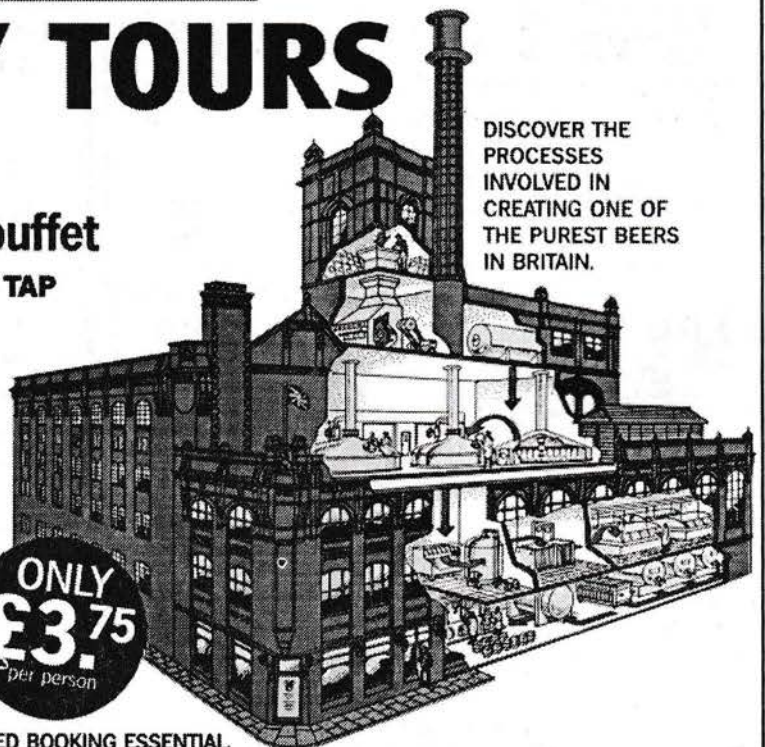
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5 Years Ago

by Phil Levison

JUNE '97

As Opening Times went to press five years ago, the 11th Stockport Beer & Cider Festival looked set to be another roaring success. Early indications were that more beer and cider than ever before was likely to be sold, but careful management and a slightly increased order had ensured that supplies lasted until late on Saturday night. Thursday night had been a particular success, with attendance and sales well up on the previous year. The Festival Overall Champion Beer was Salopian Ironbridge Stout (congratulations to brewer Martin Barry), and overall Champion Cider/Perry was Minchew.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

There was a report on a visit to the Beartown Brewery in Congleton, which had then been established for 2½ years, and although brewing to capacity, it was still being run on a part-time basis by its founders, Ian Burns and Andy Millican. Sadly local outlets were thin on the ground, the one exception being Congleton FC, where Beartown beers were achieving cult status. Most of the production headed south, where distribution was handled by Crouch Vale Brewery, and another firm in Saffron Walden.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

On the national brewing scene, it was expected that the Monopolies Commission would announce their enquiry into the proposed Bass take-over of Carlsberg Tetley. Rumours had circulated that the whole deal would be called off because of too stringent conditions, which would leave C-T in some sort of limbo. But regardless of which way the deal went, the succeeding 12 months were likely to see yet more turmoil in the brewing industry, which obviously wouldn't be good news for pubs or pubgoers alike.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Closer to home, rumours had also been circulating about the Romper at Ringway. Greenalls were reported to have plans for the pub, and it had been alleged that trade was well down - regulars who had been going to the pub for years were said to have found alternative places to drink. About a year previously, Boddingtons had tried to turn the place into an upmarket eatery, but they had withdrawn their plans after uproar from all quarters. The question remained - would Greenalls be similarly responsive? *(no prizes for guessing what the answer to that turned out to be - Ed(1))*

★ ★ ★

Finally, some comments from "Manchester Matters", which showed how prices could vary in the same area. In this case Didsbury. Bottom of the price range was a pint of Holts in the Nelson - £1.15, the cheapest in Didsbury. Next came Hydes Bitter in the Albert (now Fletcher Moss) at £1.35, followed by £1.70 for a pint of 5% Head Brewers Choice at the Royal Oak. Greenalls Original at the Crown was £1.76, but topping them all was Draught Guinness at £2.15 in Bass's Irish theme chain pub, O'Neills.

CURMUDGEON



Pubgoers 1, Killjoys 0

I'm no great fan of football, but it was good news that the High Court decided to ignore the killjoys and grant pubs extensions for early-morning World Cup matches. As England only play in the World Cup finals every four years, if they're lucky, and this is the first time ever that the event has been held in a time zone which means that the matches are played in the early morning UK time, it's hard to argue that it doesn't qualify as a special occasion.

One Methodist churchman was reported as saying that fans should stay at home and watch the matches with their children rather than going to the pub, a comment that smacks more of Victorian temperance campaigns than of the realities of life in 21st-century Britain, when well over half of adults have no children under 18 living with them.

Whenever any extension of opening hours is proposed, these Dismal Jimmies forecast an orgy of drink-fuelled violence, yet it never happens. Dire consequences were predicted when pubs were allowed to open all day in the late 80s, yet overall it's led to a much more civilised drinking atmosphere. It's instructive that the only time when drink-related trouble does occur on any kind of scale is the one time when the licensing laws require large numbers of drinkers to be abruptly turfed out onto the streets - eleven o'clock at night.

Pubs and Parenting

Eyebrows were raised when Wetherspoon's announced that they were applying for children's certificates for virtually all their pubs, apparently a dramatic reversal of their previous policy of over-18s only. However, the reality was more modest - that accompanied children would be admitted to designated family dining areas, before 6 pm, when eating a meal.

That sounds perfectly reasonable, and nobody wants to go back to the days when children were expected to sit outside the pub in the car with a bottle of pop and a packet of crisps. Today, in most areas, and certainly around here, there's a wide choice of establishments that make an effort to attract families. But this isn't good enough for some parents, who seem to want children to be admitted to all areas of all pubs at all times, and complain vociferously whenever they come across a pub that won't accommodate their requirements. Yet, unless they are eating a meal, or playing in a "fun factory", the pub is the last place children want their parents to take them. It is not being insensitive to the interests of children to suggest that tired, bored seven-year-olds really shouldn't be in a raucous, smoky boozery at ten o'clock at night just as mum and dad are getting stuck into their fifth round of the night.

Given the enormous amount of pub space nowadays where children are not only tolerated, but positively welcomed, surely it's not unreasonable to ask for a few old-fashioned urban locals to remain as adults-only zones.

Curmudgeon Online: www.curmudgeon.co.uk



COPY DATE FOR THE JULY 2002 ISSUE OF OPENING TIMES IS JUNE 28

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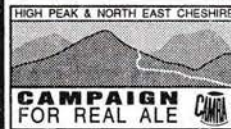


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HIGH PEAK EVENTS

THE HIGH PEAK WALK

4th Annual Sponsored Charity Walk

The High Peak Branch's 4th sponsored Charity Walk will take place on Saturday 22 June. The Charity being supported this year is MIND, the mental health charity and is indeed a worthy cause to stretch your legs for.

The route this year is not too strenuous; only a few near vertical slogs over windswept uplands in driving rain. You do not need to be a member of the Special Boat Squadron to do this; if Branch Chairman Tom Lord can do it, so can you!

There is a 10.30am start at the Royal in Hayfield to a finish at Stalybridge Labour Club, and a good range of handpumped cask ales.

The pubs en route are expected to be:

1. Pack Horse, Mellor Road, New Mills
2. Oddfellows, Moored, Mellor
3. Little Mill, Rowarth
4. George & Dragon, Charlesworth
5. Centurion, Gamesley
6. White Hart, Mottram
7. Rising Moon, Matley Lane, Hyde, Newton
8. Stalybridge Labour Club

This gives an excellent range of beers to go at - even if it is chucking it down! Details and official MIND sponsorship forms can be obtained from Tom Lord (0161 427 7099 (h), 0161 837 4474 (w))

...Pub Ne
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While I hear that permission to demolish the Jolly Sailor (Stockport Road, Marple) and build houses on the site has been refused due to local objections, the pub still looks likely to come down. Having been seriously damaged by fire twice in recent weeks, the burnt out remains are now facing demolition on safety grounds.

Shaws Bitter from the second Tameside micro-brewery (the LAB at the Lowes Arms being the first), on Park Road, Dukinfield, has occasionally been available at the Star, Glossop; Old Glove Works, Glossop; Stalybridge Labour Club; Royal, Hayfield, plus a few other local outlets.

The British Protection (Hough Hill Rd, Stalybridge) now has two regular, changing guest beers. A welcome addition to the Stalybridge pub scene.

The George Inn in Buxton, near the Opera House, is proceeding with a good renovation and is also firmly back in the real ale fold with four regular changing guest beers.

The Tame valley Inn, Park Road, Dukinfield, has the best kept beer garden in the area, I'm told.

David and Donna Meagh believe they have backed a winner after taking over as licensees of the Dane Bank, Denton. The local couple have moved into the pub with their two daughters, Kate 6, and Lucy 5.

This is their first venture into the licensed trade, but having run a betting shop in Denton for the past two years they are no strangers to managing a business.

"We want to make the most of the Dane Bank's full potential and develop the family-friendly atmosphere that licensees John and Dot built up before us," said David.

To help realise their plan, the couple have already started a pets corner at the pub. There are already two rabbits, and by this summer the new tenants will have expanded the beer garden to make room for ponies, a goat and chickens.

David s the keyboard player in a band, "Flight of Earls" who will perform every other Sunday, as part of regular Saturday and Sunday night live music sessions at the pub.

16



UPSTAIRS AT THE GLOBE

Frank Wood Gigs in Glossop

The Globe, on High Street West, Glossop, as reported last month, was recently sold by Jennings and bought by Ron Brookes, one of the driving forces of the Global Music Club who use the pub as their base.

I thought it was about time for me to take in a gig and report it back to OT, so on Wednesday 29th May, I called in, not for a Lift gig but for one of the recently introduced "Upstairs at the Globe" nights, which are held every Friday night and alternative Saturdays when the Lift performances. This was an extra mid week gig, that may become a monthly slot.

Immediately when Ron and his partner Diane Virgo moved in, their first job was to sort out the beer range- and to put handpumps upstairs as well, so I settled myself at the bar and tried firstly the regular beer, John Willie Lees Bitter, moving on to the guest beer as the night went on (always from Pictish but changing, tonight it was Summer Solstice).

First on the bill tonight was our compare Robert Smith Wright, a former stand up comedian and lover of local live music who sang and told some jokes, ably assisted by local guitarist Mike Walters. Next came Stefan Pope, a remarkable talent whose voice was like none I had heard before, with such a range of high and low notes. With his long hair and catchy songs, he went down well and must be a tip for stardom in the future.

Next on was Eliza P, a funny guitar lyricist, singing songs about real life the way she sees it ('they loved each other so much they could each break wind under the covers', was a typical line of a song). Steve O'Donoghue was on next, a type of Billy Bragg/Elvis Costello singer songwriter, snapping at the underbelly of society. I was really looking forward to Buzz Hawkins coming on next. Years ago in the late seventies he led a local Glossop band who used to play at the now shut Rose and Crown up the road, and whose cult popularity got them in the charts at one stage. In more recent years he has become the voice of the Bradshaws of Barnoldswick on local radio. A 15-minute Bradshaws sketch was inevitable and Audrey, Billy and his dad were brought to life on stage followed by a few entertaining songs from his forthcoming musical about northern life. He was partnered on stage after this by Mick Coleman, who has had success himself in the past with a number 1 chart hit in 1978. Mick firstly gave a hilarious account of his childhood days growing up on Hattersley, before he got his old friend Kevin Parrott up to do their hit number one together — Matchstalk Men & Matchstick Cats and Dogs. Very nostalgic and topped off a great night, with good real ale as well. Very highly recommended — give the Globe a try!

OPENING TIMES ADVERTISING

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36-HOUR OPENING FOR NEW YEAR PARTIES

Licensing minister Kim Howells has unveiled proposals to allow the permanent relaxation of licensing hours at all future New Year's Eves in England and Wales.

The proposals would allow pubs to open for 36 hours from 11am on New Year's Eve until 11pm on New Year's Day.

Dr Howells said: "The impact of the relaxation of licensing hours for the Millennium celebrations and last year's New Year's Eve was monitored and proved successful. That is why the Government is now consulting the public on a permanent change affecting all future New Year's Eves.

"If we decide to seek Parliament's approval of this measure, the permanent change to licensing hours would increase opportunities for people to celebrate New Year's Eve how and when they choose and provide the industry with the chance to give their customers what they want."

It is hoped to make the change for this year.

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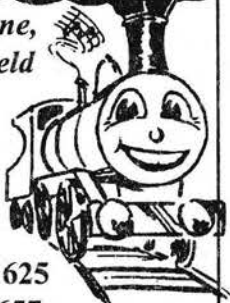
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17

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LOOKING BACK

Opening Times readers will have noticed that the Queen celebrated her Golden Jubilee recently. In this brief feature we take a look back at what the local pub and beer scene would have been like 50 years ago.

A Pub On Every Corner

The thing about pubs 50 years ago is that there were so many more of them. In some inner-city areas there really was a pub on every corner, or so it seemed.

There had been some losses in pre-war clearances and of course wartime bombing accounted for others, but despite this, there were still a huge number compared to today. They varied in size from small beer houses to more substantial establishments which would provide accommodation for travelling salesmen or theatrical entertainers. Most were run by tenants of the large number of local breweries and while rents were low, beer was cheap and it is doubtful whether they all provided a satisfactory living for their licensees.

What would strike the modern-day visitor is how unspoilt they all were. Some pubs had been refurbished or built in the inter-wars but by and large most pubs remained much as they were when built in Victorian times. Despite this they still provided rather more in the way of mod cons for their occupants than much of the surrounding housing.

Many, though, had had little investment for years and would have been shabby and scruffy, certainly by today's standards. Vaults were often men-only, off sales were substantial, pub food was almost non-existent. Despite this, the pubs of 50 years ago were places of social gathering with a community spirit that many modern pubs, despite their increased levels of comfort, struggle to match.

Many of these communities were about to be swept away as part of the great slum clearance programmes. The pubs, often the last buildings to go, went with them. In some places, notably East Manchester, many of the pubs survived into the 1970s and 80s, sustained by the area's heavy industry. Recession saw both industry and pubs vanish in just a few short years.

Pint of Mild, Please

The most popular beer 50 years ago was mild, although trends were starting to change rapidly and it wouldn't be long before bitter began its inexorable rise to dominance. The standard range for many local brewers was mild, bitter and perhaps the odd speciality and almost certainly a strong ale for the winter months. In fact the Manchester tradition seems to have been two milds, one dark, one light, and local bitters tended to the very pale and very bitter.

Every pub sold cask beer and a lot of it was pretty poor stuff. Cellar standards were much lower than today, cellar cooling was virtually unknown and pouring back slops, particularly into dark beers, was a widespread practice. As a result, bottled beers were becoming more popular, often mixed with a half of draught beer to liven the latter up. Some things haven't changed though - future predictions of the shape of the pub trade were just as bonkers then as they are today, with Ind Coope predicting that many pubs in years to come would offer nothing but bottled beers.

The choice of beers was wider than it is today. While the number of different beers available in the Opening Times area is perhaps greater now than then, they are confined to a much smaller number of pubs.

In 1952 there were 18 breweries operating in the broad area covered by Opening Times while today there are 12, although only five have survived throughout (Robinson's, Hydes, Holts, Boddingtons and Moss Side's Royal Brewery, then known as the Red Tower Lager Brewery). The rest of today's brewers are now micros while in 1952 virtually all the breweries supplied substantial tied estates, ranging from the 20 or so pubs owned by the likes of Smith's in Macclesfield and Swales of Hulme, to the several hundred run by Wilsons. In addition, the Salford concerns of Threfalls and Groves & Whitnall supplied substantial numbers of pubs in this area.

STATESIDE DRINKING

As some readers may be off to the USA on holiday soon, Chris Walkden shares his recent experiences of beer drinking there and offers some advice.

For many years, my trips to the USA never included any serious beer drinking as there was nothing widely available but bland mass produced rubbish. In fact, one of the delights of coming home was looking forward to a fine pint of Robbies in the Church Inn in Cheadle Hulme.

But things have changed now. You can still get a fine pint of Robbies in the Church, but lots of tasty beers can be found in the USA, especially if you do your homework first. And sometimes they can be found in places you would not expect- for example the top notch Hyatt in downtown New Orleans had 15 beers on tap- true, some were national rubbish, but over half were brews from local micros.

A good place to start planning your trip is the internet and specifically at realbeer.com. This site allows you to search for breweries, brewpubs and good bars in every US State and can give you location maps and nearby accommodation too. This will stop you being tempted to drink and drive- don't do it because it is not worth it and the consequences could just spoil your whole holiday.

You will come across other bars not noted on the site- this is not because they are no good- just that the US is a big place to survey and keep the records up to date- just think of the effort that goes into keeping the Stockport beer scene up to date!! You can update their records too when you get back.

Many US bars have the beer taps at the rear of the bar, which sometimes make it difficult to see what is on. Don't worry, the bar staff will usually help you or there may be a beer menu available. Especially in a brew-pub, you are likely to be able to purchase a sampler selection which provides a small (around 1/4 pint) glass of all their brews, often along with some tasting notes. Most brewers go for a pale ale, a stout / porter and a wheat beer at least plus there may be other seasonal specials. The realbeer.com site often has hot links to the brewer's website. You may be able to arrange an impromptu tour of the brewery if the staff can fit it in- or they may have set times where you can book in advance.

Samplers are also sometimes available in bars where there is a large selection of beers. One such is the Yardhouse Chain, which is set up in California. Their premises in Long Beach was only a five minute walk from my conference hotel and claimed to have over 200 beers on tap- I only counted 188!! They were providing a sampler set of 6 beers, all of different styles and the selection changed every few days. However if you want a small sample of a single beer just ask - most places will be happy to oblige. I didn't bother with the Boddington's Pub Bitter - there were more important things to try. Pale Ales and IPAs can be found in abundance and are usually really bitter, Cascade hops often being used. Just think Oakham JHB.

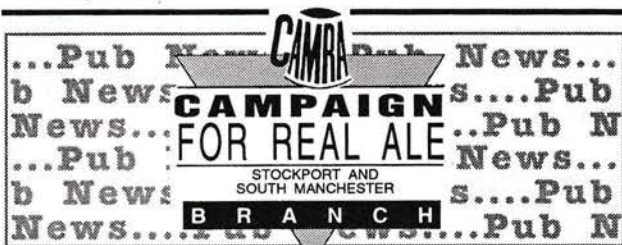
One of the delights of a visit to the States is Sales Tax/ State Tax, which will be added to the bill. And the USA is the land of tipping too, so a beer can be expensive. Some places use the pint as the smallest measure- ask for a half and you may get half a yard of ale as happened to me - where else but in the Yardhouse!! And what about top ups- well there is no law to make people do it and it is usually not asked for - say no more!!

Of course, this is based on my experiences in a limited number of US bars, so you may find something totally different. But no longer does a trip to the US mean bland and unexciting beers if you know what to look for. Happy Quaffing!!

...continued from previous column

Although many pubs sold Draught Bass and Whitbread brewed at Stockport's Royal Oak Brewery to supply local trade, national brewers were unknown. How many observers of the local brewery scene in 1952 could have guessed that the next 10 years would see a whirlwind of takeover activity which would see many local brewers swept away, their beers and breweries vanishing forever?





A twenty-year apprenticeship has paid off for Dinah Murphy, the new licensee of the Finger Post at Offerton. Her father, David, has run the pub for more than two decades but is now planning to take a back seat and leave the pub in his daughter's safe care.

"Working at the Finger Post is almost a way of life for me and it seems like a natural progression that I take over from my dad and keep the business in the family," said Dinah.

She will be running the business with her partner Eddie Quayle who will take care of cellar management while she



Dinah and Eddie with Brewery Director David Robinson, after the completion of their five day licensee training course

works front of house to look after customers. Eddie will also keep up his work as a self-employed roofer when not at the pub. Dinah's plans are to keep the business running to the same successful formula that has helped establish it within the community and as the home of Stockport County Supporters Club.

Sean Nicholson, the new tenant of the White Swan in Fallowfield, is certainly no stranger to this Robbies' pub. Having worked for the past two licensees he already knows most of his customers and now looks forward to putting his personal stamp on the business. In addition to his current regulars, he is also hoping to attract new customers. "We have a good beer garden and children's' play area here, which we will develop through the summer, and our Friday jazz nights, which have been running for 20 years, will certainly be

continuing," he says. "I've been in the licensed trade for 13 years, having started out as a barman and working my way up to manage the bar of a large hotel in Wales."

Sean will be running the pub with his partner Susan Gardner and the help of Karen Preston and Michelle Kelly behind the bar.

Pete Clarke and Julia Barber have been regulars at the Union in Reddish for over 20 years and have now realised a dream and taken over as tenants of the pub.

It has been a bold move for the couple who have both given up full-time jobs to begin the new venture. Pete had worked as a duty supervisor at Manchester Airport for 18 years and Julia was a retail manager in Stockport.

"The events of 11 September were the trigger for our move because I had the chance to take voluntary redundancy when passenger numbers began to fall at the airport," said Pete. "At the same time we heard that the tenancy of the Union was about to become available and so we both jumped at the chance." Both Pete and Julia have experience of life behind the bar at the Union having worked as relief managers there over the last 10 years. Julia, who is local to Reddish, has also worked at and managed other pubs in the area before. Having undergone the Robinson's five-day training course, Pete now intends to add another cask beer alongside the Best Bitter currently sold at the Union.

Also new to the pub is the football team which will represent the Union in the Stockport & Cheadle League and players are also being sought to join Julia in a net ball team. Potential recruits should get in touch at the Union.

The Wrights Arms in Offerton also has new relief licensees in the form of Terry and Jackie Green who come to the pub from Hartlepool via Carlisle! Recent beers on sale at the pub have included Flowers IPA and Cain's Dr Duncans.

Over the Jubilee weekend of 30 May to 4 June, the Scottish & Newcastle owned Ship Inn on Altrincham Road, Styal, held its first ever beer festival. 25+ beers were on sale from handpumps with 12 being on at any one time.

The beers were sourced from the Scottish Courage range and the rest from the Beer Seller agency. The pub's normal range is Theakston's Best Bitter and Charles Wells Bombardier, plus three to five guests.

Licensee David McCartan has held the reins for 13 months and in that time has probably increased trade threefold. A large beer garden has been created from the former yard at the rear; a good food trade was in evidence as was a BBQ.

Apart from leagues for darts, crib and other pubs games and sports, a number of local pubs participate in one of the country's few karaoke leagues. Yes, indeed. It's very appropriate, though, because did you know that Stockport is actually the birthplace of karaoke? It was the creation of one Roy Brooke who created "Roy's Singalong Machine" in a workshop at Goyt Mill, Marple, back in 1975. His invention, allowing singers to read song lyrics while an instrumental version of the track played, was taken up by a Japanese firm, which renamed it karaoke or "empty orchestra". So, now you know.



APPLICATION FOR CAMRA MEMBERSHIP (Opening Times 218)

I / We wish to join the Campaign for Real Ale Limited, and agree to abide by its rules.

NAME (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms) Date of Birth

PARTNER (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms) Date of Birth

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

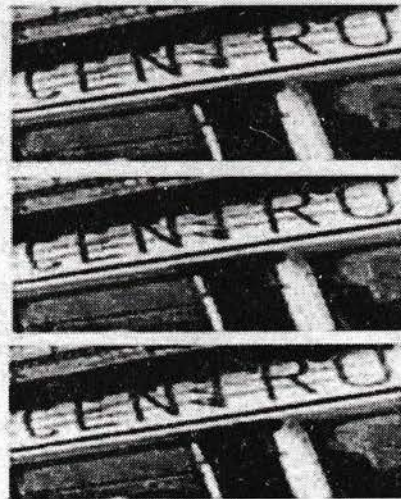
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PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO CAMRA

SINGLE £16 JOINT £19 UNDER 26 / OAP: SINGLE £9 JOINT (both must qualify) £12

Send To: Karen & Chris Wainwright, 173 Shearwater Rod, Offerton, Stockport SK2 5XA
(Marple & High Peak Area to: Tom Lord, 5 Vernon Drive, Marple SK6 6JH)





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